

and most of us would leave our rooms and go down
smashed and stinking in torn and bereft clothing
with rolled cigarettes in our mouths, asking,
"you all right, Benny? Benny, you all right?"
and he would be covered with just the proper amount
of vomit and blood and we would circle about him
with our solicitations but my need for another drink
always overcame me and I'd go back to my tiny room
with my girlfriend or we'd go back to the F.B.I. agent's
place and the cops never got Benny and the ambulance
never came and you wouldn't hear from Benny again until
next time.

there were other people there too and they were quite
as interesting and then my girlfriend died and I moved
five blocks west and six blocks north.

YES

no matter who I'm with
people always say,
are you still with her?

my average relationship lasts
two and one half years.
with wars
inflation
unemployment
alcoholism
gambling
and my own degenerate nervousness
I think I do well enough.

I like reading the Sunday papers in bed.
I like orange ribbons tied around cats' necks.
I like sleeping up against a body that I know well.

I like black slips at the foot of my bed
at 2 in the afternoon.
I like seeing how the photos turned out.

I like to be helped through the holidays:
4th. of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving,
Christmas, New Year's.
they know how to ride these rapids
and they are less afraid of love than I am.

they can make me laugh where professional comedians
fail.

there is walking out to buy a newspaper together.

there is much good in being alone
but there is a strange warm grace in not being alone.

I like boiled red potatoes.

I like eyes and fingers better than mine that can
get knots out of shoelaces.

I like letting her drive the car on dark nights
when the road and the way have gotten to me,
the car radio on
we light cigarettes and talk about things
and now and then
become silent.

I like hairpins on tables,
on the floor.
I like knowing the same walls
the same people.

I dislike the insane and useless fights which always
occur
and I dislike myself at these times
giving nothing
understanding nothing.

I like boiled asparagus
I like radishes
green onions.

I like to put my car into a car wash.
I like it when I have ten win on a six to one
shot.

I like my radio which keeps playing
Shostakovich, Brahms, Beethoven, Mahler.

I like it when there's a knock on the door and
she's there.

no matter who I'm with
people always say,
are you still with her?

they must think I bury them in
the Hollywood Hills.

-- Charles Bukowski

San Pedro CA

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